



Educating, Engaging and Mobilizing Parents to Take Action on
Issues that Matter Most To Them...

Testimony before Human Services Committee

H.B. 5823 An Act Implementing a State-Wide Coordinated Two-Generational Model

S.B. 795 An Act Concerning a Two-Generational School Readiness & Workforce Development Plan

Testimony by Marilyn Calderón, Executive Director

Connecticut Parent Power

Thursday, February 5, 2015

Good afternoon, Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Moore and members of the Human Services Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of:

H.B. 5823 An Act Implementing a State-Wide Coordinated Two-Generational Model

S.B. 795 An Act Concerning a Two-Generational School Readiness & Workforce Development Plan

I am Marilyn Calderón, Executive Director of Connecticut Parent Power a statewide parent-led organization that engages, educates and mobilizes diverse parents from across the state to act on issues that matter most to them improving outcomes for all children in areas of early childhood, care, education, health care reform and K-12 school systems.

Connecticut Parent Power works hand in hand with collaborative statewide partners that include, but are not limited to, the Connecticut Association of Human Services, Connecticut Voices for Children, the Early Childhood Alliance and All Our Kin whom all support HB5823 and SB795.

Connecticut Parent Power would like to take a moment to commend the legislature for their shared vision in passing legislative laws that promote the wellness of all children and their families to be able to access quality care and educational services that truly promote preventative benchmarks to ensure that all families succeed. For the past four years, Connecticut Parent Power, alongside statewide partners and most importantly parents have worked together to produce a plan for early childhood that would continue to cultivate a system that works for all children and families with the full establishment of the Office of Early Childhood under Commissioner Myra Jones-Taylor.

We commend each of you on the selection of leadership for this critical role to shape an early childhood system that reflects the realities faced by diverse children and their families in our wonderful state of Connecticut. As you know, the establishment of the Office of Early Childhood was only the first step to streamlining costs and the first stage to



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building a one point of entry for our parents to best navigate a system that has been quite confusing for years to access. Therefore, we believe that HB5823 will enable the Commissioner of Social Services, in consultation with the Commissioner of Labor, to create a pilot for two-generational model programs that promote long-term economic success for low-income families. Such programs may include, but not be limited to:

- (1) Related support services,
- (2) an opportunity for parents to acquire advanced technical skills to increase employability and sustainable employment,
- (3) intensified and targeted sector and workforce training and education,
- (4) co-location of children and adult services,
- (5) cross-sector professional development,
- (6) programmatic linkages for child and parent,
- (7) proven models of success for workforce readiness, and
- (8) data on the efficacy of the program for children and adults, which is simply a win/ win, as we foster intergenerational success for low-income families that deserve the same access to quality and intentional programs/ services that shape a better end result for all!

We know, parents are their child's first and most important teachers, whom need the appropriate information, supports and financial opportunities to ensure that the whole family is safe, secure and sound from any additional stressors that keep a family from functioning at their optimal level.

Consequently, SB795 will also create a statewide plan to facilitate the educational and economic success of low-income households by viewing such households as two-generational units comprised of individuals requiring educational services and those requiring career readiness services. The plan shall include:



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- (1) strategies to help such households access early learning programs, adult education, job training and other related support services;
- (2) methods to streamline the provision of services through the co-location of child and adult service providers;
- (3) strategies to coordinate and utilize both public and private entities and organizations that offer services within low-income communities;
- (4) modalities enabling partnerships with both state and national philanthropic bodies to enable state-wide replication and implementation of the plan; and
- (5) creation of an interagency work group to oversee the implementation of the plan and the provision of its services within the targeted communities to implement a two-generational school readiness and workforce development plan that cultivates a consistent approach with wrap-around services/supports that systematically embraces the full scope of child and parent readiness with skills that promote self sufficiency, self reliance, and financial security options that remedy many of the traumatic factors that tend to keep our most vulnerable families from succeeding in making ends meet with early care/access, adult education pathways, workforce development skill building, etc.

HB5823 and SB795 are a promising improvement for every stakeholder that is invested in the early childhood system for the greater good of our most vulnerable, our children and low-income parents and their families.

We also understand the importance of cultivating more intentionally the spaces and places that wrap services around every child and family more holistically because “this is best practice.”

As you know, research shows that investing early during the youngest years of life with a wrap around approach, gives us stronger returns on future savings and what better way to foster what we have all supported for years; early starts are good, but earlier is better...to establish a two-generational strategy that embraces and fosters the top ten positive systems change trends in the long run that are anchored in state and national research to promote a culture of change and practice that:



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1. **Creates two-generational demonstration models to test approaches that blend service provision with neighborhood and systems change with cost savings.** Incentivize coordination, co-location, professional development, braided program linkages for child and parent, communication and shared outcome analysis. Offer best practices and technical assistance in advance of the formal application. Create a learning community among recipients. Select pilots with collective impact strategies, a cradle to career policy and readiness for systems reform.
2. **Creates one or more public-private partnerships with philanthropy in the design, implementation plan and evaluation of the two-generational pilots.** Utilize low-, mid- and high-level strategies. Identify best practice models for replication through an intentional, coordinated, phase-in strategy.
3. **Supports a workforce liaison to administer and guide two-generation strategy and build connections between partner programs and employers who are essential to its success.** A workforce intermediary would have contacts between the various workforce development programs and early childhood initiatives and would get feedback from the private sector to assure the program meets local economic needs.
4. **Develops two-generational co-training opportunities for leadership and staff members across agencies in workforce, human services and early childhood.** Across sectors, service providers need increased training and education about both the target population and whole-family expertise; programmatic and managerial support for strength-based two-generation approaches. Assure case practice in each agency to support a family decision making process, including a family economic stability plan, rather than a separate plan for each child and adult.
5. **Builds two-generational state programming over four years.** Establish a four-year state target for a percentage of existing programs to reflect significant two-generational programming, with cross-agency support. Direct specific state partner agencies to: a) provide incentives for RFPs reflecting two-generation approaches; b)



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set aside a percentage in current grants, serving children and adults, to begin offering incentives for two-generational transition; c) set aside a percentage in current and future grants to foster cross-agency two-generational initiatives; d) identify health; housing; transportation; labor; infant-toddler care, pre-k through elementary education, including special education; adult education and social services as priority agencies for two-generational initial development and engagement.

6. **Creates a no-wrong door approach** that encourages agencies to connect families with needed programs. Strengthen two-generational strategy and outcomes by developing and implementing a simplified, single eligibility determination process that helps the family across areas of need and learning.
7. **Incentivizes adult education to develop a cross-generation strategy in the 10 towns with the greatest low-literacy adults.** Supply additional adult-education funding to support this added support. This could include literacy assessments of young adult students to facilitate classes with best practice adult literacy models as well as preschool center/adult-education center collaboration for care and coordinated programming; writing for children, storytelling skill/arts; monitoring student progress e.g. Watch Me Grow.
8. **Creates a state inter-agency workgroup to** a) align policies for low-income children and their parents, b) address barriers to two-generation service provision, c) find opportunities to bring child and adult service programs together through strategic financing (e.g. blending and braiding funding) and incentives for coordination; d) arrange for development of a service manual for two-generational policy and program development and conversion; e) design and implement a state and community learning collaborative of programs that braid two-generational intent in early care, adult learning, literacy, housing, pathways to work, ELL, transportation, health and mental health.



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9. **Contemporizes TANF for the New Economic Context.** Current welfare law limits access to learning and reasonable employment. Time limits on training and on learning experiences obstruct economic self-sufficiency. Connecticut should consider a) time limit extension from 21 to 60 months, b) access to community college and employment and training programs, c) removal of cliff falls that destabilize child care access, d) adult education, workforce training and other career pathways as eligible work participation activities, e) priority on mix of learning and relevant work practice, f) access to quality infant toddler program and pre-k and g) a social work model that helps parents in workforce success.
10. **Partners, through NCSL and NGA,** with the other three states developing two-generational policies and programs for technical assistance, foundation support, a multi-state learning community and assistance with evaluation. The states may include Colorado, Minnesota, Utah and Connecticut.

I know you, the Human Services Committee all care about the wellness of our most vulnerable children and parents by already building an Office of Early Childhood that embraces the ever changing two- and even three generational household in which our children live in to promote the holistic success of the whole child and whole family more intensely and intentionally.

In closing, our CT Parent Power families and statewide partners look forward to your continued support on these critical bills and we thank you for the opportunity to testify before you.